Proposed Synopsis for Ph.D. Pre-Registration Seminar

A Qualitative Analysis of Death, Grief & Its Manifestations: with Special Reference to Complex and Uncomplicated Bereavement of Parents and Children

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Submitted to

University Department of Sociology
Ranchi University, Ranchi
Jharkhand

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Introduction

Grief and the accompanying sense of loss is an intensely intimate lived experience of an individual. No other person can live it along with or on behalf of an individual. Grief resulting from the death of an important person in an individual's life, the emotional pain that derives from it and the sense of loss can be perceived as a journey that an individual undertakes in his/her life (Kübler-Ross, 1969). This journey, nonetheless, has no definite, logical destination. The journey of every bereaved person is quite unique in the sense that there is no particular prescribed way of undertaking it (Walter, 1999). The journey may not be looked at as a tidy process, with definite stretches/stages that each individual passes through. It cannot be definitely timed or measured in any particular way. Every single person navigates through this journey on his/her own (Walter, 1999). Quite significantly, grief, emotional pain and the sense of a deep loss is a part and parcel of every individual's life (Becker, 1973). Grief, which derives from a sense of loss (Yalom, 2008), whether a minor or a major loss encompasses each of our lives, as all of us continue to face struggles and losses in our lives. No one has ever escaped from having to undertake this journey (Becker, 1973). The nature of grief, its intensity, and its duration may vary. Nonetheless, grief permeates our lives at multiple time periods. It may thus be perceived as a continuous lived experience (Wortman and Silver, 1989).

Despite the fact that grief is ubiquitous and pervasive (Didion, 2005), it has nonetheless remained a taboo subject for a long period of time (Mitford, 1963). Professional literature on death, bereavement, loss, dying, grief and pain largely focuses on psychological aspects of the individual (Kübler-Ross, 1969), while ignoring the sociological factors. A strictly psychological perspective fails to offer a wholistic understanding of the lived experiences resulting from death, bereavement, loss, dying, grief and pain because they do not take into account the wider socio- cultural context within which death, bereavement, loss, dying, grief and pain exist (Clark, 2005). Lived experiences and emotions need to be conceptualized within the broader socio- cultural context because these experiences and emotions do not seem to exist in vacuum. social processes and social structures (Hoggett & Thompson, 2012; Frost & Hoggett, 2008;). For instance, gender norms and expectations significantly shape the experience of grief and how and where it is expressed (Beisser, 1995). Hence, incorporating a

sociological perspective into existing literature in these areas is significant. Emile Durkheim, one of the founding fathers of the discipline of Sociology, in his 1897 book 'Suicide: A Study in Sociology, investigated suicide rates and explored the social context and factors affecting the suicide rate, as a social fact. Following Durkheim's seminal work, death, bereavement, loss, dying, grief and pain emerged as areas of continuing sociological concern, research and writing. (; Fulton, 1965; Bauman, 1992; Walter, 1994; Neimeyer, Klass, & Dennis, 2014).

Grief and pain, emerging from death (Worden, 1982) or a sense of loss and the accumulated traumas of life handicaps an individual from successfully charting the course of his/her life and dealing with the problems of our lives (Frankl, 1946). A sociological understanding of death, dying, grief, bereavement, loss, pain and trauma is pertinent in order to not just complement the ground work done by psychology in this field but further augment the socio-cultural understanding of these ubiquitous areas of our life and their inter- connections, inter-dependencies and inter- relations with other areas of our lives and the larger social structure (Byrant, 2003).

This qualitative study attempts to offer an in- depth analysis of the lived experiences of adults, specifically parents who have lost their children to death and children who have lost their parents to death and are living with a deep sense of grief, bereaving the loss of a loved one and grappling with a transformative and powerful force, that is grief. Emile Durkheim made the crucial point that society precedes each of us—that is, each human being is born into a pre-existing society (Durkheim, 1983). Socio- cultural contexts have an immense bearing on our lived experiences (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Hence, this study also seeks to analyse the socio- cultural contexts of death, dying, grief, bereavement, loss, pain and trauma.

Social Construction of Death

Psychologically, death represents the cessation of life. It represents the cessation of biological phenomena of breathing. However, death, is beyond a simple psychological phenomenon. It is significantly embedded in social, cultural, religious, and symbolic meanings and practices (Hertz, 1907). Sociologists conduct cross- cultural analysis to compare and contrast as to how diverse cultures conceptualize death differently, have distinct beliefs related to death, organize and practice diverse mourning rituals (Parkes, Laungani, and Young, 1997). For instance, some culture's view death as a distinct part, i. e. the end of the life cycle (Becker,

1973). In these cultures, death is looked at as a celebratory event, where the soul is freed to transition from this worldly realm to the other- worldly realm (Barlett and Steele, 1993). In contrast, there are other cultures that perceive the unknown phenomena of death as a threat to life (Garrett, 2007). These cultures lay emphasis on after death/ mourning rituals, which seek to ease the process of transition to an unknown afterlife (Bryant, 2003).

Modern processes like urbanization, modernization, westernization, secularization, globalization have contributed significantly in enhancing cultural diversity (Sassen, 1998). It is in this context that a sociological analysis of death seeks to analyse as to how the migrants, immigrants, and the marginalized negotiate with the dominant cultures with respect to their death rituals and mourning practices (Emmerson, 1994). Cultural hybridisation, cultural assimilation and cultural adaptation significantly impact an individual's and/or a community's lived experience of death, dying, grief, and pain in a multi- cultural social system (Hong, 2000).

Further, transformation in society in terms of social ideas, norms, values, morality, attitude, ethics, education, technological and scientific advancements, cultural diversity and the like across historical epochs and spaces has affected how societies conceptualize death, dying, grief, pain, mourning practices, etc (Leming and Dickinson, 2014). Secularization and growth of scientific temper have altered the ways in which death, dying, grief, pain, loss and mourning practices have traditionally been understood and practiced across diverse societies and time periods (Eliade, 1957). A sociological analysis of the same will reveal how these shifts impact individuals, communities and the larger social structure and processes.

Similarly, funeral rituals and other related practices also vary across societies and cultures. They are a direct reflection of a particular culture's norms, values, beliefs, religion, morality, and social integration. As a particular society's ideas, beliefs, and attitude towards death undergoes a shift, so does its funeral rituals and practices (Pedroso de Lima, 2010).

Further, every society constructs its own framework of bureaucratic, public policy and legal processes that deal with death and managing the affairs related to death (Byrant, 2003). These, in turn, are also a direct reflection of the social norms and society's sense of morality pertaining to treating the dead and his/her belongings (Quigley, 1996). These include the

processes of registration of death, issue of death certificate, disposal of resources, will, inheritance, euthanasia, organ donation, etc.

Symbolic representations associated with culture also vary from society and society (Stanton et al., 2012). Diverse forms of media, literature and art make use of potent symbols to represent death (Sullivan and Greenberg, 2013). A sociological analysis of these symbolic cultural representations reflects the collective conceptualization of death in a culture and the solidarity that derives from the common representation (Sullivan and Greenberg, 2013).

Further, death demarcates symbolic social boundaries and clearly defines the social roles of individuals and social groups (Goffman, 1956). It is during the process of death rituals that symbolic social boundaries between social groups like caste. Clan, ethnicity, etc are re-enforced further.

Social and economic factors such as employment, income, access to quality and timely healthcare, education, awareness, gender inequality, environmental degradation and the like not only affect the quality of an individual's life but affects health indicators like infant mortality rate, maternal mortality rate, life expectancy, death rate, etc (Davidson, 2012). Inequalities in the social system adversely impact the subaltern sections of the population (Freire, 1968). These systemic inequalities have an impact an individual's lived experiences and also impacts the way an individual experiences the reality of dying and death (Sudnow, 1967). Healthcare institutions play a pivotal role and directly impact the medical decisions that the patient (patient autonomy) or his/her family make during the process of dying (Worpole and Maggie Gold, 2009). Expensive and advanced level medical treatment and quality palliative care services can only be assessed by a relatively small section of the society, while a larger majority of the marginalized sections continue to remain deprived if these services (Mueller and Polifroni, 2014)

Social Construction of Grief/ Bereavement

The notion of grief is primarily associated with an individual (Brussel and Carpentier, 2014). It is automatically assumed that grief represents an individual's emotional response to a crisis or loss. The word is used synonymously with emotional pain. However, grief is a socially constructed and culturally embedded notion (Harris and Bordere, 2020) that varies across

societies, cultures and time- periods. How an individual experiences grief and how it is expressed are also socio- culturally constructed (Harris and Bordere, 2020). Socio- cultural ideas, values, norms, morals, roles, statuses, etc determine the conceptualization and expression of grief (Carp, 2018). Who is a principal mourner? What is the legitimate grieving period? What are the dietary restrictions during the grieving period? What are the other specific dos and don'ts during the mourning process? All of these questions are answered by a particular society based on its culture. For instance, some cultures lay emphasis on public mourning, whereas in other cultures, grief and mourning are seen as encompassing the domain of the private.

Malinowski in his work on the Trobriand Islanders noted the significance of life cycle rituals in terms of providing social and psychological support to an individual facing a crisis situation (Malinowski, 1922). Practice of a ritual is a social occasion that brings together a community of persons. Rituals serve a plethora of functions ranging from comforting the mourner to solidifying social bonds to honouring the dead man's soul, etc (Malinowski, 1922). Communities, social group, social relationships, kins, and social networks have a significant role in the life of an individual who is at the verge of dying, or a mourner grieving the loss due to death of a significant person, coping with a sense of loss, agony, solitude (Malinowski, 1922). Family, kins, close friends of the mourner provide comfort, support and assistance in the face of a crisis situation (Malinowski, 1922). They act as the primary care-givers. Sociologists analyse the strength of familial, kinship and social bonds and how these impact the mourning process. The availability and quality of these support networks can significantly impact how individuals cope with grief (Neimeyer, 2011).

In the modern digital times, online platforms and virtual communities have an increasingly significant role in supporting individuals experiencing grief (Doka, 2010).

Gender is a significant socio- cultural factor that determines how men and women experience and express grief in any particular society and culture (Doka and Martin, 1999). The socio-cultural norms of a given society shape the notions and roles associated with masculinity and femininity (Butler, 1990). This in turn strongly determines how each gender is expected to display their grief or conceal it within certain spaces and contexts (Goffman, 1963). For instance, in a patriarchal society, men may be expected to maintain an impassive stance in dealing with grief, while women may be expected to be vocal and expressive of their grief

(Hochschild, 1983). It also significantly impacts how and where and from whom they seek support, comfort and practical assistance to cope with grief.

Broader social and structural factors such as availability of educational opportunities, employment, income, levels of poverty, access to timely and quality healthcare, bases of stratification such as caste, class, race, ethnicity, gender, region, etc impact the lived experiences of grief (Ferrante and John Hagan, 2016). The duration and complexity of the bereavement process is affected by all of the above-mentioned factors.

Religious and cultural believes pertaining to life after death also shape the grief experience of the mourners/bereaved. Those cultures and religions that have faith in the ideas of salvation, reincarnation of the soul, attainment of heaven, spiritual progress and the like find comfort in these ideas and this in turn affects how individuals subscribing to these ideas perceive grief and cope with grief (Kübler-Ross, 1969).

Death symbolizes existential themes such as the fragility of life, the inevitability of mortality, and the search for meaning. These symbolic aspects affect how life and death are conceptualized and how grief is experienced (Becker, 1973).

Social institutions and processes also significantly impact grief and the grieving process (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Health care policies enacted and implemented by the government, health care institutions, insurance agencies; support services; counsellors and mental health professionals all have an impact on dying, death, grief, loss, trauma, and pain (Field and Coast, 2011). Sociological analysis explores the role of stratification, politics, economic factors, cultural factors, religious and psychological factors in shaping social institutions and processes that have an impact on grief.

Social Embeddedness of Pain

Pain, which may ordinarily be perceived in terms of physical discomfort or mental trauma is nonetheless socially and culturally embedded in the social structure (Hochschild, 1983). Social norms, values, beliefs, ideas, morality, gender, class, caste, ethnicity, race, and the like determines who, how, where, when and to what extent pain may be expressed (Scheff, 1976). Some cultures may expect that individuals bear with their pain and maintain stoic silence

about it in the public, while other cultures may encourage individuals to express their pain and seek support to cope with the pain. Cultural beliefs pertaining to pain have a strong effect on how individuals conceptualize, express and cope with pain (Herrera and Turk, 1999) A particular culture, for instance Indian culture perceives pain as a manifestation of illness (Ahmed, 2004). It may associate pain with negative connotations. In such a culture, an individual might be motivated to conceal their pain and look down upon it. On the contrary, there may be other cultures, for instance some sub- Saharan African cultures that perceive pain as a normal part of life (Morris, 1991). They neither glorify pain nor devalue it. In such a culture, an individual might be motivated to endure pain and display resilience in the face of pain.

Pain, in some cultures is also associated with the concept of social stigma. Individuals dealing with pain- physical and mental, for a considerable period of time are subject to ridicule, discrimination, exploitation, deprivation and exclusion from social life and its aspects such as employment, education, access to healthcare services, etc (Nettleton, 1995).

Sociological enquiry into the domain of pain also delves into the area of education and awareness generation pertaining to pain management (Gibson and Turk,1999) dealing with social stigmatization (Goffman, 1963) associated with pain and recovery.

Sociological analysis of pain explores the role played by traditional healing practices, (Romanucci-Ross, Moerman, and Tancredi, 1997) traditional medicines, healing rituals, healers and their cultural significance in diverse cultures (Fadiman, 1997). This encompasses not simply the physical dimension of pain and healing, but also delves into the psychological, cultural, spiritual and social dimensions of pain and healing process (Twohig and Broom, 2000).

Sociological analysis explores how pain narratives shape an individual's lived experiences and their narrative thereby shaping and re- shaping their identity (Morris, 1991). For instance, those that suffer from experience of chronic pain construct their narrative of suffering and this narrative in turn not only shapes their identity but also impacts their relationship with others (Scarry, 1985).

Sociologists analyse how occupational hazards, workplace stressors, and ergonomic conditions contribute to work-related injuries and chronic pain syndromes. They examine how workplace policies and safety regulations impact employees' physical well-being and access to adequate pain management (Edgell, Gottfried, and Granter, 2011)

Social, economic and institutional factors such as access to accurate information, insurance coverage, timely diagnosis, medication, specialized pain clinics, transportational facilities, etc have direct impact on pain management (Bird, Conrad, and Fremont, 2010). These factors vary across class, region, caste, gender, ethnicity, etc. Access to social capital (Kawachi, Subramanian, and Kim, 2008)—such as informational support, social connections, and community resources—enhances individuals' resilience and facilitates their ability to recover from pain and rebuild social ties.

Further, sociologists analyse the biomedical models of pain management in the context of ethical and cultural framework of a society (Nettleton, 1995).

Social Construction of Loss

The focus of this study is limited to analysing loss in the face of death and imminent dying. Bereavement may be referred to as the experience that an individual undergoes having lost a significant person to death. It is characterized in the form of grief. A nuanced sociological analysis conceptualizes loss not simply as an emotion but rather looks at it from social, cultural, economic, political, structural, legal/policy, religious/spiritual lens (Stroebe, Hansson, Schut, and Stroebe, 2008). A sociologist attempts to analyse as to how individuals from specific cultural backgrounds conceptualize loss, how they navigate their path through the journey of loss, how they maintain and/or rebuild relationships while coping with loss, and how they seek comfort and support from the family, community and larger society in the face of a loss (Neimeyer, 2011).

Inter- generational Grief

The aim of this qualitative study is to delve further into the concept of inter- generational grief, pain, trauma and sense of loss. Inter- generational grief simply refers to the transmission of unresolved trauma, grief and the sense of loss from one generation to a subsequent generation. Inter- generational grief primarily seeks to analyse the deep impact of

unresolved trauma, loss, pain and grief which not only impacts the physical, emotional, social, cultural and overall well- being of one generation but is strong enough to be embedded in the conscious, collective memory of the next generation (Levine, 2015). Conscious, collective memory in turn generates a collective identity based on a common understanding of the past. Where does inter- generational pain derive this strength and potency from is the cause of sociological enquiry. Another element of enquiry pertains to the means through which historical pain, grief, trauma and loss are transmitted to the collective memory of the subsequent generations (Casey, 1987). These may take the form of oral history, family stories, narratives, ritual practices, commemorative events, etc.

An array of processes ranging from familial relationships and dynamics, psychological impact, socio- cultural norms, beliefs, ideas and practices, cultural- historical context, etc influence the conceptualization and lived experience of inter- generational grief, pain, trauma and loss (Schwab and Schmitz, 2018).

Key Terms

Death: The act or fact of dying; the end of life; the final and irreversible cessation of the vital functions of a living organism.

Dying: It refers to being connected with or happening at the time of somebody's death. [Oxford English Dictionary (OED)]

Grief: It refers to an individual's reaction to a loss.

Bereavement: It specifically refers to the duration of time during which an individual or a group mourns a death/loss.

Mourning: Refers to the process through which an individual or a groups deals with and eventually accepts and adapts to a death/loss.

Anticipatory Grief/ Preparatory grief/ Anticipatory loss: It is a lived experience of an individual before he/she faces an actual loss in the material reality. This, in particular, is the grief that one deals with in the face of an imminent loss/death of a loved one. This type of

grief eventually prepares an individual or a group to deal with the actual loss, as and when it occurs.

Grief Reaction: It refers to the response of an individual or a community after having experiences a loss/death.

Pain: Pain is largely understood as a sensory experience but it also has emotional connotations.

Trauma: Trauma may be understood as an experience that an individual or a group faces when they are exposed to sudden frightening and distressing events like for instance the death of a loved one.

Loss: It refers to the condition of no longer having something that one possessed earlier or as much of something as one had earlier.

Thanatology: It is a branch of science that delves into areas pertaining to death its causes, imminent death and its effects as well as the needs of the terminally ill and their kins and close persons.

State of the art

Despite the fact that grief is ubiquitous and pervasive, it has nonetheless remained a taboo subject for a long period of time. Professional literature on death, bereavement, loss, dying, grief and pain largely focuses on the mental/psychological aspects of an individual, while sidelining the sociological factors. A strictly psychological perspective fails to offer a wholistic understanding of the lived experiences resulting from death, bereavement, loss, dying, grief and pain because they do not take into account the wider socio- cultural context within which death, bereavement, loss, dying, grief and pain exist. Lived experiences and emotions need to be conceptualized within the broader socio- cultural context because these experiences and emotions do not seem to exist in vacuum. They are conceptualized and responded to within the wider social structure and social processes. This research strives to locate death, dying, grief, bereavement, pain, loss and trauma within the context of the social structure and its inter- related, inter- dependent and inter- connected aspects. It aims to focus on the social aspects pertaining to death, dying, grief, bereavement, pain, loss and trauma

with special reference to complex and uncomplicated bereavement of parents in the face of death of a child and vice versa.

Emile Durkheim, a classical sociological thinker, in his **1897 book 'Suicide: A Study in Sociology**, delved into the analysis of areas pertaining to death, grief and mourning. In analyzing suicide as a social fact, Durkheim lay emphasis on the role of social integration, social control and collective conscience. Durkheim classified suicide into four different types- anomic, fatalistic, egoistic and altruistic based on the relationship between an individual and the society. For instance, egoistic suicide is a manifestation of weak social ties between the individual and the society, where an individual prioritizes himself/herself over the social group to which he/she belongs; altruistic suicide, on the other hand, is a manifestation of excessive integration of an individual into his/her social group, to the extent that the individual prioritizes the society over his/her life; anomic suicide represents lack of adequate social control in society which is created by a state of normlessness, resulting from widespread disruptions in social norms and regulations. As a result, the individual is left on his/her own to navigate through the social life. The individual prioritizes his/her ambitions and desires in the absence of social regulations on the same. This in turn leads to increased vulnerability, alienation and a sense of isolation, all of which are suicidal currents in society. Fatalistic suicide, on the other hand, stems from excessive and oppressive social regulation, to the tent that an individual develops a sense of hopelessness and despair that he/she has no control over the course of his/her life.

Further, **Durkheim in his 1912 book, 'The Elementary Forms of Social Life**', emphasizes upon the significant role played by mourning rituals in the face of death. Death creates a social vacuum in society and disrupts the life of the mourners. During such an extraordinary moment in time, rituals provide spiritual and psychological comfort and practical assistance to the mourner by providing him/her a definite social framework within which they can express and deal with a loss, their grief and trauma. Further, it also brings the mourner, the family and the community together thereby strengthening social integration in society. Common rituals reaffirm social ideas, beliefs and values thereby providing a basis for greater degree of collective conscience and hence social solidarity.

In his **1893 book, 'Division of Labour in Society' Durkheim** emphasized the significance of social integration in mitigating the traumatic effects of death, grief, pain and loss. He explored how enhanced division of labour and subsequent emergence of specialized roles in

modern, industrial societies leads to a decrease in the degree of collective conscience thereby weakening social integration in society. This in turn will impact how individuals and social groups experience and cope with bereavement, trauma, loss and pain.

Bronsilaw Malinowski in his seminal work, Magic, Science, and Religion and Other Essays, 1948 laid stress on the functional significance of rituals in coping with life cycle crisis. Societies have their own unique ideas, beliefs, traditions, practices and rituals for dealing with death, dying, bereavement, loss, pain and trauma. Mourning rituals, in diverse cultures, provide a structured framework for mourning and assist the bereaved individual in coping with emotions pertaining to grief and loss spiritually, psychologically and socially. Malinowski also highlighted the significant aspect that lived experiences of grief impact social structure, social processes and social relationships in society. Mourning rituals reinforce kinship ties and cement social relationships further and further facilitates individual healing.

Sigmund Freud explored grief in his book "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917). As per Freud, mourning is a process in which the mourner gradually detaches from the object which he/she has lost, including the dead person, and re-directs their attachments elsewhere. Freud further suggests that defence mechanism like denial of reality of death or repressing the emotions are a way through which the individual tries to cope with loss and grief. These mechanisms protect the individual temporarily from a series of overwhelming emotions. However, these mechanisms also inhibit an individual from accepting the loss and adapting to the change, unnecessarily prolong the mourning period.

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross in her 1969 work on “Living with Death and Dying” has developed the five stages of grief theory. These stages are denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. Socio- cultural factors significantly impact the lived experiences and expressions of individuals during these stages. Social norms have an effect on how an individual navigates through these stages. How a particular culture conceptualizes dying and death will impact individual behaviour pertaining to these. For instance, in certain cultures, individuals may find themselves at greater ease while voicing about grief or expressing grief, while in other culture’s there may be a taboo surrounding death and related phenomena and hence individuals may be reluctant about expressing their emotions related to grief, pain, loss and trauma.

Another prominent sociologist whose works can be used as reference point in a sociological understanding of dying, death, grief, bereavement, loss, pain and trauma is Erving Goffman. **Goffman in his works like, "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life" (1956) and "Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior" (1967)** focusses on understanding the self in the context of everyday life. Grief, anticipatory grief, dying, death, sense of loss, pain and trauma are all a significant part and parcel of our everyday lives. Goffman's theories offer an insight into how an individual conceptualizes and navigates their everyday lives in the society in the face of grief, anticipatory grief, dying, death, sense of loss, pain and trauma. Goffman's idea of impression management offers valuable insight into understanding how individuals manage their emotions pertaining to grief, anticipatory grief, dying, death, sense of loss, pain and trauma while interacting in the society. In his work on "Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity" (1963) Goffman analyses as to how individuals manage discreditable aspects of their personality which may be a result of a loss, trauma or grief experience. Goffman's work on social roles, performance, dramaturgical analysis, and rituals provides a comprehensive understanding as to how an individual experiences and expresses grief within definite socio- cultural structures.

Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann in their seminal work, "The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge" (1966) focus on how every aspect of our reality is socially constructed through everyday social interactions and that nothing is absolute and given. This perspective is fundamental to understanding that death, dying, grief, loss, pain, and trauma are socio- culturally constructed and hence their meaning, norms, interpretations and practices related to them differ from culture to culture, across space and time. Lived experiences pertaining to death, dying, grief, loss, pain, and trauma need to be understood against the background of particular historical, social, cultural, religious, economic and political contexts. Berger and Luckmann lay emphasis on the role played by socialization in the process of transmission of knowledge. This can be applied in understanding as to how individuals and social groups learn and internalize the socio-culturally constructed ideas, values, beliefs, practices, customs, traditions, and coping mechanism pertaining to death, dying, grief, loss, pain, and trauma. Further, Berger and Luckmann introduced the concept of plausibility structures. This concept can be used to understand how individuals and social groups conceptualize and respond to lived experiences pertaining to death, dying, grief, loss, pain, and trauma within their particular socio- cultural contexts.

Barbara Ehrenreich in her work "Bright-Sided: How the Relentless Promotion of Positive Thinking Has Undermined America" (2009) has strongly critiqued the excessive emphasis on good health and optimism in the American culture to the extent that illness, grief, pain and loss are looked down upon as pessimism and negativity. This has a detrimental impact on those who are looked down upon for their illness, for grieving, for being in pain and experiencing loss. The immense pressure that the society exerts on people to stay positive and optimistic in the face of death, dying, grief, loss, pain, and trauma marginalizes and belittles the lived experience of people.

In her book **"Natural Causes: An Epidemic of Wellness, the Certainty of Dying, and Killing Ourselves to Live Longer" (2018) Barbara Ehrenreich** has critiqued the cultural norms and attitude of societies and cultures that perceive illness, dying and death as matters pertaining to the domain of health and medicine only. Modern societies over- emphasize on quality of life, good health, greater life expectancy, etc while ignoring discussions pertaining to death, dying, grief, loss, pain, and trauma.

Further, Barbara Ehrenreich has analysed as to how social stratification and social inequality affect the access to health care facilities for a large section of marginalized people in society. Lack of adequate and timely healthcare services has an impact on how people belonging to the marginalized sections of society experience dying, death, grief, loss, pain and trauma.

George Ritzer in his 1993 publication, 'The McDonaldization of Society' critiques the modern process of rationalization. Processes of rationalization also have an impact on death, dying, grief and trauma. Every society constructs its own framework of bureaucratic, public policy and legal processes that deal with death and managing the affairs related to death. These include the processes of registration of death, issue of death certificate, disposal of resources, will, inheritance, euthanasia, organ donation, etc. The emphasis on formalization, standardization, control, calculability, efficiency, predictability within institutions affects how people experience death, dying, grief, pain, loss and trauma.

Modern processes like urbanization, modernization, westernization, secularization, globalization have contributed significantly in enhancing cultural diversity leading to cultural flows with the assistance of global media. It is in this context that a sociological analysis of death seeks to analyse as to how the migrants, immigrants, and the marginalized negotiate with the dominant cultures with respect to their death rituals and mourning practices. Cultural

hybridisation, cultural assimilation and cultural adaptation significantly impact an individual's and/or a community's lived experience of death, dying, grief, and pain in a multi- cultural social system.

Anthony Giddens in his 1986 work, "The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration" had presented the theory of structuration. Giddens argues that it is individuals who produce, shape and transform social structure and social practices through their actions. In the context of grief, death, loss, pain and trauma, this implies that while individual experiences and expressions related to death, dying, grief, and pain are shaped by the norms and expectations of society, the individual also exercises his/her own agency. Giddens concept of reflexivity in relevant in understanding how shape their identities, navigate through their lived experiences, their coping mechanisms, and their unique, personal narratives of death, grief, pain, loss and trauma.

Anthony Giddens has also written about risk and uncertainty in modern societies, specifically in the context of well being and death. Giddens concepts of existential anxiety and ontological security shapes how individuals manage and cope with the crisis of grief, anticipatory grief, death, loss, pain and trauma.

Nancy Krieger, a social epidemiologist has analysed the impact of social factors on grief, anticipatory grief, death, loss, pain and trauma. Her work has focusses specifically on how social inequalities in the form of gender, race, ethnicity, class, etc translate into disparities in the domain of health and medicine and this has a direct impact on how different individuals and social groups within society experience grief, loss, pain and trauma. Inequalities embedded in social structure and social processes strongly influence the access to health care services and facilities and health outcomes and ultimately become embedded in individual experiences related to health and medicine. Multiple forms of inequalities intersect and hence subaltern sections of the society experience unique forms of vulnerabilities with relation to health, grief, anticipatory grief, death, loss, pain and trauma. Krieger's perspective is significant in order to understand how socio- structural inequalities affect the lived experiences of grief, anticipatory grief, death, loss, pain and trauma.

"Passing On: The Social Organization of Dying" (1967) is a classic ethnographic work (in a hospital's cancer ward) by **David Sudnow**. It focuses on the social, emotional, institutional

and interactional dimensions of grief, dying and death. Sudnow documents the interactions, exchanges, rituals and gestures that take place between the patient, his/her family, friends, relatives, nurses, palliative care givers, etc. These in turn highlight how individuals and social groups like families, kins negotiate the fact of an impending death and loss and how dying individuals cope with the fact of their own death. Sudnow's work highlights the emotional, humanistic aspect of dying, death and loss trying to understand how individuals deal with anticipatory grief, how they cope up with and face the emotions associated with the impending loss of a loved one, within their specific socio- cultural context. This particular ethnographic research makes significant contribution not only towards the sub- field of sociology of death but also towards the sub- field of sociology of emotions. Sudnow brilliantly captures how human emotions are socially constructed via social norms, beliefs, values, expectations, roles and culturally expressed in the face of dying, pain, loss, grief and death. Sudnow also offers a critique to medicalization of dying and death and argues for adopting a more humanistic approach towards death and dying and related phenomena and experiences.

Margaret Stroebe and Henk Schut in their work, "Complicated Grief" (2012) developed the Dual Process Model of Coping and Bereavement (DPM). This model proposes that an individual experiences pressure from two different types of stressors during his/her lifetime and often oscillates between the two. These are loss- oriented stressors and restoration-oriented stressors. Loss – oriented stressors focus on the loss itself and the resultant grief, pain and trauma, while the restoration-oriented stressor focusses on adapting to a new reality and consequently shaping a new identity. Hence, this model lays emphasis on the constantly shifting nature of grief, loss and coping mechanisms. An individual needs to address his/her emotions pertaining to death, loss, pain, grief and trauma but he/she also needs to adopt a practical attitude towards the challenges of life and learn to adapt himself/herself along with the shifting reality.

Margaret Stroebe and Henk Schut have also developed the Cognitive Stress Theory (CST) which focuses on understanding how cognitive processes influence dying, death, anticipatory grief, grief, pain, loss and trauma. An individual's conceptualization, understanding, beliefs, values and interpretation of death, dying, anticipatory grief, grief, pain, loss and trauma has a strong impact on their lived experiences and their responses to the experiences. Socio-cultural contexts play an important role in shaping our cognitive processes.

Debra Umberson in her book, "Death of a Parent: Transition to a New Adult Identity" has analysed the impact of death of a parent on individuals and families. Her work sheds light on how the loss of a parent affects the social relationships within the family, how it impacts the emotional and physical well being of the family members. She delves deep into the emotional consequences of loss of a parent which manifests itself in the form of psychological stress, depression, grief, prolonged trauma, and pain. Umberson stresses as to how the death of a parent has a significant impact on the identity of a child, particularly if the event occurs during the formative years of a child's life such as childhood and adolescence. Umberson underscores on the need of a strong support mechanism helping the child in dealing with this significant loss. Supportive family, friends, kins and others enable a child mourning the loss of a parent to better navigate through the period of bereavement and grief and adapt to the new reality of life. Umberson has also looked into how gender and related social norms and expectations shapes how each gender differently experiences the loss of a parent, how their mourning practices are different and how their grief experiences are shaped differently.

Umberson's study also focuses on the health effects of losing a parent on a child. She examines potential links between children losing their parents in early childhood and adolescence and facing detrimental health conditions in later life.

Problems to be investigated

This qualitative research attempts to offer a descriptive analysis of the unique lived experiences of individuals in the face of death, dying, grief, bereavement, pain, sense of loss and trauma. The research aims to specifically analyse the patterns of complex and uncomplicated bereavement of parents and children in the face of loss of a child/children and parent, respectively. The study will offer a sociological understanding of what has hitherto been regarded as a domain of psychology by laying bare the mechanisms through which death, dying, grief, anticipatory grief, bereavement, pain, sense of loss and trauma are constructed socially, culturally, spiritually, and epidemiologically. The research aims to highlight how death and grief are embedded in the social fabric of society and yet are subjectively construed by individuals experiencing death, grief and loss.

Objectives of the investigation

1. To understand the unique lived experiences of parents in the face of death, dying, grief, bereavement, pain, sense of loss and trauma resulting from the death of a child or children.
2. To understand the unique lived experiences of children in the face of death, dying, grief, bereavement, pain, sense of loss and trauma resulting from the death of a parent.
3. To analyse the patterns of complex and uncomplicated bereavement of parents and children in the face of loss of a child/children and parent, respectively.
4. To identify the social- cultural factors that shape lived experiences of dying, death, grief, anticipatory grief, pain, loss, and trauma.
5. To identify the spiritual and religious factors that shape lived experiences of dying, death, grief, anticipatory grief, pain, loss, and trauma.
6. To identify the epidemiological factors that shape lived experiences of dying, death, grief, anticipatory grief, pain, loss, and trauma.
7. To analyse how and why different individuals navigate through bereavement in their own unique ways and not everyone journeys through all the stages of grief as identified and categorised by psychologists and sociologists.

Research Questions

Specific research questions that will be explored are as follows:

1. How are lived experiences (how they make meaning and define a phenomena) of dying, death, grief, anticipatory grief, pain, loss, and trauma shaped?
2. What are the socio- cultural factors that shape the lived experiences of grief?
3. What are the structural factors that shape the lived experiences of grief?
4. What are the spiritual and religious factors that shape the lived experiences of grief?
5. What are the epidemiological factors that shape the lived experiences of grief?
6. Why do some parents and children face complex bereavement issues while others navigate successfully through uncomplicated bereavement?
7. How do multiple losses affect and shape the grief experience of people?

8. To compare and contrast death, grief and loss as a universal experience vis-à-vis death, grief and loss as an unique, individual experience.

Research Methods

Qualitative research is a process of understanding that aims to investigate into the particular processes by which people construct meanings about their unique socio- cultural worlds. Phenomenology, the study of lived experience, or life world, is an important approach in qualitative research.

I propose to base this study on both primary and secondary data. I propose to conduct open-ended interviews (with parents and children) with phenomenological questions pertaining to experience of grief and loss. I also propose to conduct open- ended interviews phenomenological questions pertaining to experience of grief and loss with family members who have lost a loved one to death and care- giving staff in the hospitals. I propose to interview spiritual leaders, political representatives, people from the field of business, bureaucrats, educationists, and doctors on the question of death, dying, grief, bereavement, loss, pain and trauma to understand the social, cultural, structural, spiritual, epidemiological, factors that shape the lived experiences of grief.

I also propose to conduct open- ended interviews with immigrants to understand how they negotiate their cultural norms, values, beliefs, traditions and practices related to death in the midst of an alien or different culture.

Further, I propose case studies of orphan children, children who have lost their parent(s) in early childhood or adolescence and parents who have endured multiple losses in terms of death of more than one child.

Sources of data and tools to be used in the collection of data

The study aims to collect and analyse primary data as well as refer to relevant sources of secondary data.

Source: The data is proposed to be collected from Ranchi, Jharkhand.

Tools- The study proposes to utilize data collected from the field as well as secondary resources.

Primary Tools-

- Purposive and Snowball sampling to identify the target population.
- Extensive, open- ended interviews with the aid of phenomenological questions with parents who have lost their child to death.
- Extensive, open- ended interviews with the aid of phenomenological questions with children who have lost their parent to death.
- Extensive, open- ended interviews with the aid of phenomenological questions with family members facing or having have faced the death of a loved one.
- Extensive, open- ended interviews with the aid of phenomenological questions with care giving staff in hospitals.
- Open- ended interviews with religious and spiritual leaders on the questions of dying, death, anticipatory grief, pain, loss, bereavement, and trauma.
- Open- ended interviews with doctors on the questions of dying, death, anticipatory grief, pain, loss, bereavement, and trauma.
- Case study of orphan children having lost both their parents.
- Case study of children having lost their parent/parents in early childhood or adolescence (8- 17 Years).
- Case study of parents who have endured multiple losses in terms of death of more than one child.

Secondary Tools

- Relevant already existing material in the form of researches, documents, case studies in the field.

Analysis of Data

For the purpose of data analysis, I propose to use the following methods:

- Manifest and latent content analysis of the interviews.
- Manifest and latent content analysis of the case studies.

- Coding the transcripts, identifying and labelling the manifest meanings within the transcript.
- Narrative analysis of text and visual data.
- Discourse analysis- interpreting the data with reference to the time and context from where it was collected.
- Thematic analysis- finding similarities and divergences in the data collected.
- Statistical methods

Significance of the Study/Relevance in Present Day Society

Despite the fact that grief is ubiquitous and pervasive, it has nonetheless remained a taboo subject for a long period of time. Professional literature on death, bereavement, loss, dying, grief and pain is largely psychological in nature with the focus resting on the individual, with hardly any reference to sociological factors. A strictly psychological perspective fails to offer a wholistic understanding of the lived experiences resulting from death, bereavement, loss, dying, grief and pain because they do not take into account the wider socio- cultural context within which death, bereavement, loss, dying, grief and pain exist. Lived experiences and emotions need to be conceptualized within the broader socio- cultural context because these experiences and emotions do not seem to exist in vacuum. They are conceptualized and responded to within the wider social structure and social processes. Hence, this particular study attempts to offer a qualitative understanding of the lived experiences of grief and how these experiences are shaped in specific socio- cultural contexts. It attempts to fill the lacunae in existing literature.

The study can be referred to by students from across disciplines like Sociology, Psychology, Thanatology, Cultural Studies, Diaspora Studies, Affective Science, etc for an in- depth understanding.

Contribution to the existing knowledge

This study will not only be a valuable addition to the existing knowledge, additionally, it intends to fill the gap in literature which has been created due to a dearth of literature pertaining to the socio- cultural interpretation of dying, death, grief, anticipatory grief, pain, loss and trauma.

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